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**TO: Economic Support Supervisors
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Workforce Development Boards
Job Center Leads and Managers**

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BEM/DWS OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 05- DRAFT

DATE: 11/16/2005

FS	<input type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	SC	<input type="checkbox"/>
CTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	CC	<input type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
FSET	<input type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input type="checkbox"/>	CF	<input type="checkbox"/>
JAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input type="checkbox"/>	RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>
WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other EP	<input type="checkbox"/>		

PRIORITY: HIGH

SUBJECT: Updates to W-2 Case Management Follow-up (CMF) Policy

CROSS REFERENCE: W-2 Manual, Chapter 7

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 2, 2006

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to provide information on a change in Wisconsin Works (W-2) policy regarding the provision of case management follow-up services (CMF) to W-2 participants who obtain employment. In addition, this memo provides guidance on providing intense, targeted employment stabilization services aimed at helping W-2 participants retain employment and pursue advancement opportunities.

BACKGROUND

Under current W-2 policy, FEPs must provide case management follow-up services for at least six months to participants who progress from a W-2 employment position to unsubsidized employment to encourage and support retention.

In addition, in the event a CMF participant loses a job and is subsequently placed in the CMS placement, if that CMS participant becomes employed again, s/he would be placed in CMU rather than CMF because currently the only pathway into CMF is from a

paid W-2 employment position. This has an unintended consequence. CMS participants who become employed are only eligible for retention services if their income is at or below 115% of FPL and they continue to meet nonfinancial eligibility. If CMS participants obtain employment with income above 115% of FPL, they are not eligible for follow-up services from the W-2 agency.

NEW POLICY

FEPs must now provide case management follow-up services for at least twelve months to participants who progress from a W-2 employment position or CMS placement to unsubsidized employment to encourage and support retention. CMS participants who obtain employment must be coded as CMF rather than CMU in CARES.

While the Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS) is not developing a statewide contact standard for CMF participants, it is expected that W-2 agencies conduct follow-up frequently enough to address on-the-job issues and prevent job loss. Along those lines, while agencies will have frequent contact with CMF participants, which more than likely will be monthly or more frequent, it is no longer a requirement that agencies complete the 30-day and 180-day follow-up screens in CARES. As is always the case, however, FEPs must document entered employments as well as other pertinent follow-up case services data on the appropriate CARES screens.

CASE MANAGEMENT FOLLOW-UP (CMF) ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES GUIDELINES

Consistent with WIA, the goal of follow-up services for W-2 participants is to ensure job stability and retention, encourage wage gains and assist in the development of career paths for individuals who obtain unsubsidized employment.

Below, we have expanded upon the services that the W-2 agency must provide to employed W-2 participants. Although this memo focuses on CMF participants, these services must also be offered to pro-rated CSJ and CMU participants.

How these services are packaged will depend largely upon an individual's needs and circumstances. Although individual circumstances vary, it might be expected that low wage earners with limited skills, low educational levels, little work history or complex personal and family needs may have more difficulty retaining jobs and, therefore, need a broader array and more intense level of services. Another factor that will help determine the level of services will be the type of job and employer with which an individual is matched. Individuals obtaining jobs at larger employers, unionized employers or higher paying jobs are less likely to experience job loss and may require less intensive services. In the end, the range and intensity of appropriate follow-up services will vary for each participant depending upon individual needs, circumstances and employer characteristics.

One challenge the W-2 agency will have is convincing participants that, once employment has been obtained, maintaining contact with the W-2 agency will help the

individual address the job-related issues that new employment brings. Typically, W-2 participants who have gotten jobs no longer care to rely upon the W-2 agency for assistance, so the agency must take immediate action to try and show these individuals that they have a better opportunity to retain employment and increase their earnings if they stay connected with the W-2 agency for additional employment stabilization services.

In selected communities, the DWD has employment contracts with refugee employment providers for bilingual job developers/case managers who can help refugees obtain and retain employment. A listing of these agencies is at:

http://www.dwd.state.wi.us/dws/programs/refugees/partner_resources/information.htm.

W-2 agencies should coordinate with these agencies when providing employment services to its W-2 refugee population. Many of these agencies have substantial experience providing refugee-specific employment services. See Administrator's Memo 04-22 and Operations Memo 04-36 [create links] for more information on coordination of employment services for the W-2 refugee population.

ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

Case Management Services

Case management services that address various personal and family needs must focus on easing the transition to work through assistance with various job related issues and supports. Case management services may include:

Job counseling and support. The FEP or job counselor should be talking with the participant on a regular basis via structured interviews to discuss the day-to-day experiences of the newly employed participant. The FEP must help the participant resolve issues that may lead to the participant quitting or being fired from the job. These issues may range from interpersonal conflicts with supervisors or co-workers, not understanding work rules or job responsibilities, issues balancing family life and work schedules, etc.

Whatever the issues may be, the FEP must both proactively seeking out what issues, if not addressed, may impact job retention and the agency must provide accessibility for the participant to contact the FEP in the event issues arise in between W-2 agency contacts. This accessibility may include providing a participant hotline for immediate job assistance, on-site case management at the place of employment, and other means that will provide a more immediate response to potential issues that may affect a participant's ability to retain a job.

An additional strategy that may be helpful in keeping newly employed participants connected to the W-2 agency is a newsletter identifying services available to the employed participant, tips on retaining employment, parenting and balancing work and family schedules as well as free activities available in the community.

Supportive service referrals. In order to help participants stabilize their job situation, the W-2 agencies must ensure that W-2 participants have a supportive services plan in place. The goal of a supportive service plan is to help individuals address family and work-related needs. The plan must include information necessary to connect participants with supportive services available within the agency as well as other resources in the community, paying particular attention to services that are a part of the agency's Children's Services Network. The plan must also include strategies for addressing family and work emergencies before these situations result in family crisis and/or loss of employment. This includes:

- √ Emergency Needs
- √ Housing Needs
- √ Household Budgeting/Money Management Needs
- √ Legal Assistance Needs
- √ Child Care Needs (for job search and work)
- √ Transportation Needs
- √ Personal and Family Health Care Needs
- √ Other needs identified by the participant that impede the participant's ability to find and retain a job.

Career development. Participants should be encouraged to think beyond that first job. By providing services such as occupational testing, career planning, goal setting, career counseling and job placement assistance, W-2 agencies can help participants plan for the future.

Job search assistance. The path to job stability and increased earnings may not be a straight one. Ideally, participants are initially matched with employers that have positions that provide advancement opportunities. However, changing jobs at least once and, at times, more than once, in a person's career may lead to earnings improvements for low wage workers. W-2 agencies should encourage employed participants to continue to look for job openings with advancement potential and the agency should continue to look for potential jobs that match the employed participant's career goals and increase their earnings. In addition, agencies should continue to encourage employers to create career ladders and other advancement opportunities within their businesses.

Rapid reattachment services. In the likelihood that a W-2 participant loses a job, it will be important for the W-2 agency to quickly attempt to reattach the individual to the job market. The FEP must immediately attempt to ascertain the reason for the employment loss, either through the participant or from the employer. Contacting the employer may also give the W-2 agency the ability to encourage rehiring of the individual if the agency can provide some additional support – on-site or otherwise. If rehire is not an option, the agency should quickly engage the participant in intense job search and identify strategies for re-employing the individual based on feedback from the employer and additional assessments, if necessary.

Education and Training Strategies

Provide education and training services that, by themselves or in combination with work will improve skills, education levels and, ultimately, lead to higher paying jobs.

Basic Education: At a minimum, agencies must ensure that CMF participants continue to work on improving basic education levels through program such as English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education and GED/HSED. Wisconsin state statutes require that when an individual is placed in unsubsidized employment and that individual needs and wishes to pursue basic education, including a course of study meeting the standards established for the granting of a declaration of high school graduation, the W-2 agency must include the activity in the participant's employability plan. The W-2 agency is also responsible for paying for any basic education services identified in the employability plan.

Job Skills Training: Agencies must look for opportunities to provide job skills training to employed participants. Sector-based career paths are one example of how an employed participant may be able to get additional job skills training that can lead to improved wages. In any case, the most ideal approach to skill development is skill development that is related to a specific job. In order to make education and job training most effective, W-2 agency efforts should focus on creating opportunities that are tied to local employers and lead to established credentials or certifications. In addition, agencies must assist participants in accessing grants and student loans to help further their education.

Given the difficulty of going to a job and school while managing family obligations, W-2 agencies must find ways to work with employers in offering training, workplace literacy, ESL and other training programs at the employer site.

Employer-Focused Efforts

Improve access to and communications with employers and leverage employer involvement in retention and career advancement efforts. The feasibility of these strategies will depend largely upon the type of employer, the number of participants placed with that employer and available resources.

- Providing on-site case management – an on-site case manager can monitor participant progress, conduct workshops and, overall, reduce the employer's burden and ease transition for newly employed participants.
- Encouraging the provision of incumbent worker training – encourage the employer to provide on-site skill development related to specific jobs and employees.
- Encouraging and supporting the establishment of career ladders with particular employers or in particular occupations.
- Conducting employer orientations or distributing employer-related newsletters that promote the services available when hiring W-2 participants and the cost-savings related to retaining employees.
- Setting up an employer hotline as a quick and easy way for the employer to ask the agency for intervention or additional supportive services.
- Measuring employer satisfaction with W-2 employment services in order to improve service delivery.

- Encouraging employers to create worksite mentoring programs pairing new workers with more experienced workers, particularly those experienced workers who have had contact with the W-2 program.
- Encouraging employers to establish transportation options for employees.

Financial Incentive and Supports

Look for ways to provide financial incentives and support to supplement low wages. These strategies should be re-emphasized once employment is obtained.

Federal and state tax credits. Make participants aware of the various federal and state tax credits available to low income workers, e.g., Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Care Tax Credit, Homestead Tax Credit, etc.

Financial literacy. Provide assistance by helping participants prepare for financial crises that can threaten job stability.

Connections to other financial supports. Ensure participants are aware of other financial supports that they may be eligible for, such as:

- Emergency Assistance
- Job Access Loans
- Housing assistance
- FoodShare
- Medicaid
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- Low Income Weatherization

CONTACTS

BHCE CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center

Program Categories – FS – FoodShare, MA – Medicaid, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – Food Stamp Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC - Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, Other EP – Other Employment Programs.

DWD/DWS/BW-2/MMM